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CHINESE TEXTS ON CHIA-NA-T'IAO/KĀNTHI:
ITS IDENTIFICATION AS A TRANS-CONTINENTAL
PORT OF INDIA

Some Chinese data have reported on the existence of a port called Chia-na-t'iao/Ku-nu situated somewhere in the Indian sub-continent. Scholars who have expressed an opinion on the subject seem inclined to identify it with Kanthi mentioned by Ptolemy and place it accordingly on the Gulf of Cutch in western India. Since there are far better reasons to locate the same port on the Gangetic Gulf, the position may be examined afresh, as the right identification of the port will place many points of historical interest in proper perspective.

It will be convenient if we first marshal a few excerpts bearing on these toponyms from the Chinese texts for our present discussion and then see what conclusions they lead to. The excerpts are from K'ang T'ai's works (A.D. 245-250), preserved in quotations of later authors.

1. K'ang T'ai says: «An-hsi, Yueh-Chih, T'ien-chu *as far as* Chia-na-t'iao, all depend on this salt.»
2. «South-west of Chia-na-t'iao, one enters a great bay. It is about 700 or 800 *li*. Then one reaches the great estuary of Chi-hu-ti river. One crosses the river and continues west and (in the end) arrives at Ta-ch'in.»
3. «From Chia-na-t'iao one boards a great merchant ship. Seven sails are unfurled with seasonal wind (with the monsoon behind one) one enters Ta-ch'in in a month and some days.»

4. *Nan Chou i wu chih*: «Ku-nu is about 8000 *li* from Ko-ying. There are more than 10,000 families (in Ku-nu). They all use four-wheeled carts driven by two or four horses. People from all corners meet there. There are always more than a hundred ships (in the harbour). The crowds gathering in the market are more than 10,000. Day and night they do business. Drums and horns are sounded on the ships. The clothes of these peoples resemble the clothes of the Chinese.»

English translation of the Chinese texts has been adopted from O.W. Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce*, s.v. Chia-na-t'iao and Ku-nu.

Now all these data pertain to the Third century A.D. Pelliot was not sure about the location of the place ¹.

Petech thought that the name may be the Chinese transcription of Ganadvipa. T'iao is obviously *dvīpa*. Pulleyblank has reconstructed the toponym as Kana + *dvīpa* = * Kanadvīpa, equating it with Ku-nu ² of excerpt no. 4 above. Wolters thinks ³ that «it was the port in north-western India on account of its sailing proximity to the rich trading world of Ta-Ch'in.» He has also accepted its identification with Ptolemy's harbour of Kanthi ⁴ on the Gulf of Cutch. I find it difficult to share this view.

The location of this port on the Gulf of Cutch is fraught with insuperable difficulties, some of which are enumerated below:

i) There is at present no independent testimony to show North-western India's connexion with South-East Asia by way of the sea in the third century A.D. On the other hand, better long-distance navigational facilities existed within India itself and these allowed men and goods to be transported from the mouth of the Ganges to the western coast of India by riverways.

1. Vide his *Quelques textes chinois*, etc., in «Études Asiatiques», II, pp. 251-52.

2. Vide PETECH, *Northern India according to Shui Shu*, p. 53; PULLEYBLANK in «Asia Major», 9,2-(1963), p. 214 and D.W. WOLTERS, *Early Indonesian Commerce*, p. 59 and note 65.

3. O.W. WOLTERS, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

4. S. Majumder Sastri (ed.), *McCrimdell's Ancient India as described by Ptolemy*, pp. 33-36, 136, 187 and O.W. WOLTERS, *op. cit.*, p. 272, note 73.

ii) According to excerpt no. 4, the distance between Kū-nu/Kanadvipa on the one hand and Ko-ying on the other has been stated to be 8000 *li*. Wolters has placed Ko-ying in western Indonesia (Sumatra)⁵. If we accept this location the distance between the two places should be 8000 *li* = 2000 British miles approximately. Logically therefore there should be, at the end of the distance, a port bearing the Indian name Kanthi. Although the measurement of the Chinese *li* has varied from time to time and place to place⁶, the above-mentioned equation may be held to be approximately correct.

iii) According to excerpt no. 3, the distance between Kanthi and Ta-Ch'in or the Roman Orient could be covered in «a month and some days». But, as we shall see in the course of our discussion that is to follow later on, all available documents indicate that the same distance from Western India's Kanthi was covered in less than three weeks.

iv) If we read the references to the sea-routes between China and India in the Chinese texts in a chronological sequence, it will be evident that the early routes passed through Huang-chi (Gaṅgā, the Ganges).

Indian as well as Chinese text-references indicate the great role played by the port of Tāmralipti in respect of its national and international contacts. It is here that one sector of the international trade-route ended and the other began. Besides, the trade-route in the Bay of Bengal in the third century A.D. was coastal and the earliest unambiguous evidence about crossing it by the ten degree channel does not come up before the days of Fa-hien in A.D. 414. There is therefore additional reason to search for the port of Kanthi in the neighbourhood of Tāmralipti, and not in the gulf of Cutch. Indeed there is actually present a derelict port of this name in its neighbourhood and it served as the twin-port of Tāmralipti in ancient and medieval times and outlived the life of its older sister.

5. Vide O.W. WOLTERS, *op. cit.*, chapter III and map no. 2 with a comment on its location.

6. It has been observed that in the fifth century A.D. *li* was considered to be a little more than 400 metres. Vide STEIN in *Han-Hiue*, pp. 11-12 and 89. On the other hand, EBERHARD reckons 496. B.m. for the *li* in Han times (*TP*, xxxvi, p. 2). Vide also P. PELLLOT, *Œuvres Posthumes: Memoires sur les coutumes de Cambodge de Tcheou Ta-Kouan*, Paris, 1951, pp. 125-26. Parallel cases are to be found in the measurement of the Indian *Krośa*, the Greek and the Roman *stadia*.

All these considerations taken together or even singly militates against the idea of locating Kān̄thi on the Gulf of Cutch. We may therefore discuss the points noted above in the light of the contemporary or near-contemporary data from India. I have stated above that in the third century A.D., there was hardly any contact of any country of South-East Asia with North-western Asia by way of the sea. Even if we assume that there was any such contact by way of the Nicobars, for instance, as in the days of Fa-hien, the sailing distance of 8000 *li* could take us only to the northern part of Malabar (mod. Kerala); in any case, not more than the southern part of Kaṛṇāṭaka in Peninsular India. In this connexion, it may be worthwhile to note that the distance between Cape Comorin at the southern tip of India to the mouth of the Indus alone is 2183 British miles ⁷. Measurement of distance does not therefore provide any valid ground in support of the equation of Chia-na-t'iao/Ku-nu with Kān̄thi on the Gulf of Cutch, except accidental similarity of names.

The derelict port of Kān̄thi near Tāmralipti (mod. Tamluk), referred to above, is still known by this name, but it was anglicised into Contai. In the map of van den Broucke, dated A.D. 1660 ⁸, it has been shown as a port under the toponym Kindua, thus Kin+ dua, the suffix *dua* being the abbreviated form of the Persian term *doab*, which again originated from the Sanskrit word *dvīpa* ⁹. The same place in the form of Kendoa is also mentioned in a despatch of Rev. John Evans, dated April 2, 1679, in which he speaks of having intended to travel in a country boat from the sloop, in which he had sailed to this place conveying thereby the idea that the place could be reached by the waterway even in the seventeenth century. In Valentijn's map, the place has been shown at the end of a small stream ¹⁰. It is now, like Tāmralipti, some miles off from the sea-shore, but there is still a light-house, now

7. A. CUNNINGHAM, *The Ancient Geography of India*, p. 2.

8. Vide reprint of the map in R.C. MAJUMDER, *History of Ancient Bengal*.

9. About the significance of the terms *dvīpa* and *doab*, vide H.B. SARKAR in «Bijdr. Kon Inst.», 137 (1981), p. 308.

10. Vide in this connexion, Census 1961, West Bengal, *District Census Handbook*, Midnapore, vol. 1 (ed. B. Roy). My attention to it was drawn by Mr. D.K. Mitra of the National Library, Calcutta (map section).

in bad shape, lying between the villages of Rasan and Kudi (under police station Egra in the Midnapore district, West Bengal).

What I have stated above is perhaps adequate to establish the existence of the port of Kindua in exactly at the place where Kān̄thi is now located. The history of this port from the later half of the third century A.D. to the sixteenth century is rather obscure. As it was the twin-port of Tāmralipti, the fate of the two ports appears to have been similar: the accumulation of sand at the mouth of the ports and revolutionary changes in the East-West trade-route, which from c. 800 A.D. onwards found it more profitable to link up commercially the empires of the Abbasids on the west and T'ang China on the east with the Śrīvijayan empire thrown in between.

After trying to establish the identity of Chia-na-t'iao/Ku-nu with Kān̄thi on the Gangetic delta, or at least making the proposal plausible, I shall now try to show that other data of K'ang T'ai's fragments remarkably agree with our proposition.

Apart from nomenclature, the identification receives support from the fact that in extract no. 4, the distance between Ko-ying and Ku-nu has been shown as 8000 *li* or 2000 miles approx. The present distance from the Calcutta port to Rangoon is 737 miles and from Rangoon to Singapore 1133 miles, i.e. a total of 1870 miles. If we add to this the distance between Singapore and Ko-ying and consider further that the ships had sometimes to make detour to avoid shoals and submerged rocks, we may possibly come to the figure of 8000 *li*. The round digits indicate that the worth of the distance has to be understood in an approximate sense.

Now, if the Chinese data about the distance take us to the Gangetic delta and the nomenclature seemingly confirms this position, other excerpts quoted above also take us to the same locality. It may be noticed that no. 1 excerpt places the toponyms in a sort of geographical order, beginning from the west, thus: An-hsi, Yueh-chi, *as far as* Chia-na-t'iao, the drift being eastwards. We shall have therefore to determine the position of the states of An-hsi and Yueh-chi in the middle of the third century A.D. When K'ang T'ai wrote his work, the eastern province of the Parthian empire had already inclu-

ded the region of the Punjab. We know this from the successful decipherment of the Paikuli inscription by Herzfeld ¹¹ and the reading of several Sassanian-Kuṣāṇa coins, which establish the fact that the Parthian empire included the Punjab in the reign of Shapur I (240-271). Since An-hsi or the Neo-Persian empire included the province of the Punjab, there was no need to go to Persia to enter the Parthian territory, as this could be easily done by crossing the eastern border of the Punjab.

Now we have to find out the location of the Yueh-chi principalities in the contemporary geo-political set-up of India. Since Sassanid dominion included the Punjab, the Yueh-Chih of the extract quoted above can only refer to the rulers of small independent principalities located in the upper Gangetic valley east of Punjab. After A.D. 146, the Yueh-chih (Kuṣāṇa) power was confined to the Mathura and adjacent regions ¹¹. In the middle of the third century, when the relevant Chinese texts were composed, the Yueh-chih land could only signify this region ¹².

This identification of Chia-na-t'iao with Kān̄thi near Tāmralipti receives additional support from the fact that, in excerpt no. 1, former place is located beyond T'ien-chu, which lay in the middle Gangetic valley beyond Mathura. The geographical connotation of T'ien-chu has no doubt varied from time to time, but in the time we are speaking of, it seems to refer to the valley of the Ganges not forming part of the realm of the Kuṣāṇa princes, as already pointed out by Boulnois ¹³.

Besides the Yueh-chih or the later Kuṣāṇas ruling in the upper Gangetic valley, there were also the Muruṇḍa chiefs holding sway in the valley of the river Sarayū ¹⁴. Their eastern neighbour was, according to Ptolemy, the Gangaridae people, i.e. the people of the lower Gangetic valley.

11. *Paikuli I*, p. 47. See also particularly K.A. Nilakanta Sastri (ed.), *A Comprehensive History of India II*, p. 251.

12. S. CHOTTOPADHYAYA, *Early History of North India*, p. 114.

13. Cf. L. BOULNOIS, *The Silk Road*, 1966, p. 94.

14. Described as Murundai by Ptolemy. Vide S. Majumder (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 212 ff.

The Muruṇḍa kings of Pāṭaliputra have been referred to in several texts ¹⁵. One of the envoys of such a Muruṇḍa king met K'ang T'ai in the court of the Funanese King. A return visit by a Funanese mission under the leadership of Su-wu left Funan and «in rather more than a year he reached the mouth of the river of T'ien-chu. They went up the river more than 7000 *li* and reached their destination» ¹⁶. This means that in the middle of the third century A.D., the Far Eastern visitors had explored the river Ganges and apparently some of their tributaries also, for 7000 *li* = 1750 British miles (approx.) from the mouth of the Ganges.

We have now to examine the feasibility of the Chinese report mentioned under extract no. 3 that the distance from Chia-na-t'iao to Ta-Ch'in, i.e., the Roman Orient, could be covered by boats sailing under favourable monsoon conditions in course of a month and some days. The great bay near Chia-na-t'iao may refer to the Gangetic Gulf, but the river Chih-hu-ti is now unknown. It may be one of the western mouths of the Ganges referred to by Ptolemy ¹⁷. The rivulats here are so numerous and the landscape features have changed so drastically ¹⁸ – some of the rivers have disappeared altogether – that it is impossible to identify the river Chih-hu-ti. In any case, the journey for Ta-ch'in starts from Chia-na-t'iao/Kān-thi. Cunningham ¹⁹ has pointed out that the distance from the Indus to Palibothra, i.e. Pāṭaliputra «measured by Schoeni along the royal road... was 10,000 stadia or 1149 British miles in length. From Palibothra to the sea the distance was estimated at 6000 stadia, or 690 British miles; thus making the whole distance from the Indus to the mouth of the Ganges 16,000 stadia, or 1838 British miles». If the intention of the Far Eastern traveller was to catch up any boat on the Indus river system, he would have to ascend the Ganges for about 625 miles above Pāṭaliputra, cross by foot or cart about 50 miles to reach the river Sutlej, the easternmost

15. S. LÉVI in his *Deux Peuples méconnus*, in «*Mélanges Charles des Harlez*», pp. 176-86 has furnished an interesting account of the Muruṇḍas of India.

16. In *Ibidem*.

17. Vide S. Majumder Sastri (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 72, 73, 100-2.

18. R.C. Majumder (ed.), *History of Bengal I*, pp. 3-7.

19. *Op. cit.*, pp. 2-3.

tributary of the Indus, and then sail down the Sutlej for another 850 Miles to reach the mouth of the river Indus. This will make the total distance between the mouths of the Ganges and the Sindh by waterways, including detour and portage by land, 2214 miles (Ganges mouth to Pāṭaliputra 689 + 625 + 50 + 850). Barring portage by land, which could have taken five days, the whole journey could have been accomplished in 22 + 5 days, the sailing progress «with seven sails unfurled» could have been an average of 100 miles per day ²⁰.

It may appear surprising to many that the journey started from Kānṭhi at the eastern end of the river Ganges and ended with its namesake in the Gulf of Cutch. It is in line with the analogy of planning toponyms of home countries, in foreign countries by founding fathers. It reminds one of such cases as Takkola in Southern India and in the Malay Peninsula ²¹, of Amarāvati in the lower Kṛṣṇā valley and in ancient Campā ²², Śrī Vijaya in the same lower Kṛṣṇā valley, Sumatra and in ancient Campā, etc. ²³. In the last two cases at least, historical association between the places can be documentarily established. There are many such cases from modern times too in connexion with the settlement of Europeans in the two Americas.

I have tried above to give more precision to the view of L. Boulnois, who has stated that, apart from two land-routes, which connected the Roman world with China, there was a third route. «It was», he says ²⁴, «a sea-route starting from the southern coast of China in the region of Kang-chou (Canton), rounding the peninsula of

20. Outwardly, this speed of boats may appear arbitrary but I have assumed this average on the basis of the *Mahāvamsa* (XI. 23-24), where it has been stated that the mission sent by prince Devānampiya Tissa covered the distance between Jambukola (a port in northern Sri Lanka) and the «haven» of Tāmralipti at the mouth of the Ganges in seven days and another seven days were required to cover the distance of 689 British miles, say 700 miles, between Tāmralipti and Pāṭaliputra. We can then say that big boats with «seven sails unfurled» could sail upstream at the speed specified.

21. Vide P. WHEATLEY, *The Golden Khersonese*, 1966, pp. 268 ff.

22. For Amarāvati and (Śrī) Vijaya in the lower Kṛṣṇā Valley and in ancient Campā (mod. Vietnam), see G. COEDÈS, *The Indianized States of South-East Asia* (1968), p. 43.

23. For Śrī Vijaya in the lower Kṛṣṇā Valley and in Sumatra, vide H.B. SARKAR, «The Kings of Śrī Sailam and the foundation of the Sailendra dynasty of Indonesia», in «Bijdr. Kon. Inst.» 141 (1985), pp. 328 ff.

24. L. BOULNOIS, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-56.

Indo-China, through the Malay Straits ²⁵, and up to the mouth of the Ganges. So far as we know this route was followed exclusively by Indian vessels. From the Bay of Bengal the merchants sailed up the Ganges to the point at which navigation ceased and the merchandise was carried overland to the ports of the West coast, where it was collected by Persian, Arab and later European traders».

The discussion made above must have made it abundantly clear that neither the question of distance nor the rule of Śaka/Muruṇḍa or other princes of foreign origin really stands in the way of the proposed alignment of the route across the Indian sub-continent for 7000 *li* (approximately 1575 miles). As there is no satisfactory historical proof of the crossing of the Bay of Bengal in the middle of the third century A.D., the interpretation of the Chinese data in the way I have done provided the only reasonable solution to the problem.

Let me now consider the possibilities of the last lap of the journey from the western coast of India to the Roman Orient. The route from the Indus basin to the mouth of the Persian Gulf at Omana on the Straits of Ormuz led to T'achin or the Roman Orient in the most convenient way. The distance between Omana and the Indus mouth is approximately 685 English miles along the coast. A straight sailing by the high seas will reduce the distance further. If we take the nearest round number, say 680 English miles, the distance could be covered under favourable weather conditions in a little over eight days, say

25. The stretch of the water-way from Jambukola in Sri Lanka to Pāṭaliputra up the Ganges was used by the Govt. Mission in the middle of the third century B.C. We also know from the *Ch'ien Han Shu* that a voyage started during the reign of emperor Wu-ti (B.C. 141-87) from Jihnan in Upper Annam. It proceeded along the coast of Indo-China and unloaded passengers at the neck of the Malay Peninsula at Shenli. The party crossed over to the other side of the Peninsula by foot in «rather more than ten days» and then boarded vessels at Fu-Kan-tu-lu to reach Huang-chi (vide text and tr. in P. WHEATLEY, *The Golden Khersonese*, pp. 8-9). This Huang-chi is, according to P.C. Bagchi, no other than Gaṅgā, i.e. the Ganges (vide Bagchi in K.A. Nilkanta Sastri, *op. cit.*, p. 772), at whose mouth lay the famous port of Tāmralipti. The first information about circumnavigating the Malay Peninsula to reach the mouth of the river Ganges (Huang-chi) occurs in the same annals under date A.D. 1-5. This is an all-sea route, but, as Wheatley has pointed out in his scholarly work cited above (p. 12), the trans-peninsular portage saved, according to the Chin-ling and Wang Hsien-ch'ien editions, nearly four months on the total journey.

nine days, the progress of sailing being c. 80 miles per day ²⁶. An indirect confirmation of this rate of progress is found in Buzurg's *Aja'ib al-Hind* («The Wonders of India»), which seems to be a collection of different centuries ²⁷, but some kernel of truth may be found here and there. The evidence is no doubt late, but since conditions of sailing were more or less the same before the introduction of steam power, the evidence may be taken into consideration.

The *Aja'ib al-Hind* tells the story of a merchant who left Sirai ²⁸ in A.H. 306 (A.D.919) for the west Indian port of Saymīr ²⁹. The following words have been put in the mouth of the merchant: «After eleven days of sailing, we saw the outlines of the mountains and the features of Sindān and Tāna ³⁰ and Saymīr. We had never heard of such voyage being made with such speed before.» However, a voyage from Narmechīreh in Persia to Sindh has been narrated in an Arabic text called *Kitab al-masalik va 'l mamalik* («The Book of the Routes and Provinces»), written by Ibn Khurdadbeh sometime between 844 and 848. It says: «Narmechīreh, the boundary between Persia and Sindh is seven days' journey by water (from Ormuz); from there to Daibul, 8 days ³¹. A third instance is culled from the Chinese Annals of the

26. F. HIRTH, *China and the Roman Orient*, p. 167; H.G. RAWLINSON, *Intercourse between India and the Western World*, p. 111.

27. From Buzurg's text translated by Marcel Devis, with Arabic text and notes by P.A. van der Lith (Leiden, 1883), pp. 165 ff.; G.F. HOURANI, *Arab sea-faring in the Indian Ocean in ancient and early medieval times*, pp. 118 ff.

28. It was located at 27° 38' N. Lat. In the days of its greatness, it rivalled Shiraj, as Istakhri says, but it was destroyed by earthquake.

29. According to the *Periplus*, Semylla was one of the Roman «Local» marts, but Ptolemy, who calls it Simylla, presents it as «a point and emporium». Now, regarding the identification of Semylla/Simylla with Saimur, Jaimur or Chaimur of Arab geographers and Cemula of epigraphy (vide Luders' list under no. 996 and 1033 in *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. X, Appendix), it may be noted that the location of all these toponyms converge on Chaul, which lies 23 miles south of Bombay.

30. Al-Bīrūnī (A.D.1030) places Sindān, called Sandān by him, between modern Broach and Sopara (Tr. E. SACHAU, *Alberuni's India*, I, p. 209). He says that Subārā (ancient Śūrpāraka, mod. Sopara) is six *farsakh* south of Sandān and Tāna is five *farsakhs* further south. It may be mentioned here that the Sindhi *farsakh* is equal to eight miles according to Ma'sūdī, but Al-Bīrūnī has adopted three miles as equivalent to one *farsakh*. This Sindān is the famous Sanjān well-known to epigraphy and literary tradition. Tāna is the abbreviated form of Sthānaka, mod. Thānā. All these places are located towards the south of Bombay.

31. The information has been furnished by Ibn Khurdadhah in an Arabic text

T'ang dynasty (618-907), which describe the sea route from Canton to the Persian Gulf. In the journey from Ceylon to the Persian Gulf, the sailors came in the last lap of the journey to Tiyu, which is usually believed to be Debal (var. Diul, Daibul), near the mouth of the Indus. After leaving that place the ship reached after twenty days another country where there was a light-house in the sea. This obviously refers to Obollah at the head of the Persian Gulf, where such arrangement existed at this time. Now, since the sources described above as well as our general calculations indicate that the distance between the two ports of western India and the mouth of the Persian Gulf could be covered within nine to eleven days, it is evident that the northern route (Gaṅgā-Indus-Persian Gulf route) could be covered in $27 + 9/11 = 36/38$ days. Since the Chinese accounts say that the distance between Tiyu (Debal) and Obollah took twenty days' shipping, one may be permitted to deduce the conclusion that it took 20-9/11 days i.e. between 9 and 11 days, to cover the distance between the mouth and the head of the Persian Gulf. All these may appear at first sight to be somewhat speculative, but one may be pardoned, as there is no other documentary evidence to fallback upon.

Now, from the head of the Persian Gulf one could go up the Euphrates halting wherever necessary, at Spasinu-Charax, Vologesias, up to Palmyra, and beyond in a detour. At the mouth of the Euphrates was Apologua, an important harbour, which imported timber from Barygaza³². A look at the map of the Roman Orient in c. 300 A.D. will convince any one that the easiest way of reaching the Roman Orient from the mouth of the Indus or from Barygaza was to sail up to the head of the Persian Gulf and then ascend the Euphrates till the boat reached near Palmyra, which was not far off from the Mediterranean sea-port of Antioch. It was from this place that the Asian sector of the Silk Road began, cover the entire distance to

called *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l mamālik* («The Book of the Routes and Provinces»), written between c. 844 and 848. Vide C. Barbier de Meynard (ed.), «Le Livre des Routes et Provinces» in JA 6: V. pp. 283-86; see also ELLIOT and DOWSON, *The History of India as told by its own historians*, i, pp. 15-16.

32. *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, 36, gives a description of this area.

China through the Middle East and Central Asia³³. Attention may be invited to the fact that Hamza of Ispahan and Ma'sūdī had stated that the river Euphrates was navigable up to Hira, a city lying south-west of ancient Babylon, near Kufa, up to the first half of the fifth century A.D.³⁴ but there is no difficulty in imagining that in the time I am discussing, the river could be traversed for a considerable distance. If my views expressed above be admitted, it will appear that the trans-continental sea and river-route, as outlined above, was an alternate to the famous Silk Road. The importance of this route can be understood from the fact that the rise of the Neo-Persian empire of the Sassanids in A.D. 226 and frequent wars with Rome, such as those in 229-232, 241-244, 258-260 and subsequent ones, made the Silk Road very often imperative. Be that as it may, in peaceful times, one could enter Ta-ch'in or the Roman Orient «in a month and some days», as per Chinese report, through the trans-continental route outlined above.

I have now to revert to the Report of the *Nan Chou i wu Chih* mentioned under excerpt no. 4 at the beginning of our study, where it has been stated about the people of Kānthi that their clothes «resemble the clothes of the Chinese». I have stated above that a considerable portion of the upper Gangetic valley as far as Pāṭaliputra was dominated by the Muruṇḍa people, who were of Scythian nationality. Similarly, the Yueh-chih were, according to some scholars, originally inhabitants of the lands lying between the Tsenn-hoang or the Tun-huang country and the K'i-lien or Tian-shan range in Chinese Turkestan. Their easiest way of intercourse with the Far East was to sail down the Ganges. Due to their racial origin, it was not surprising that their clothes should resemble those of the Chinese. Of the twin

33. Vide the map of the route in L. BOULNOIS, *The Silk Road*, in A.D. 150 pp. 50-51.

34. Regarding this statement, it has been observed that the translation of Mas'ūdī is not however so precise as to warrant such a conclusion, and the remarks of Rawlinson have thrown considerable doubt about the whole proposition (vide in this connexion J.T. REINAUD, *Relations* I, p. XXXV; Ma'sūdī (c. Barbier de Meynard and Pavet de Courteille, *Les prairies d'or*, i, pp. 216 ff.). The tradition for the close connexion of this port with India was so close that Al-Ṭabari described it as *Farz al-Hind*, i.e. The Marches of India. In any case, there is no question about the navigability of the river upstream for a considerable distance in the third century A.D.

ports of Tāmralipti and Chia-na-t'iao (Kān̄thi), the former has yielded – the latter has not yet been archaeologically explored – terra-cotta figurines with Kuṣāṇa affinity. A terra-cotta figure of a Kuṣāṇa/Śaka warrior has been unearthed from Tāmralipti³⁵, another three figurines with Kuṣāṇa affinity in respect of their dress (long tunic covering the body from neck to knee) have also been discovered from the same place³⁶. The same site has also yielded a multiluted plaque showing a chariot from Kuṣāṇa times³⁷. There were also other subsidiary ports within a range of about 150 miles from Tāmralipti, but all located on the banks of the Ganges or their tributaries, which reveal Śaka-Kuṣāṇa contact through art. Thus, at the excavation site at Candrakatugar and its twin-city of Beḍācampā, which lie, about 30 miles north-east of Calcutta, on the bank of the Vidyādhari, a tributary of the Ganges, there have been found not only objects of Graeco-Roman origin³⁸, but also stamped and inscribed sherds of the Kuṣāṇa period³⁹. Potteries from Suṅga-Kuṣāṇa times have also been unearthed from Harinārāyanpur 4 miles south of Diamond Harbour, along with «rouletted potsherds of Roman or Romanize origin»⁴⁰. This place is located on the bank of the river Sarasvatī, now dried up, but which carried the main discharge of the Ganges up to the early middle age. Also at Daulpotā, located about six miles north of Diamond Harbour, have been found terra-cotta figures and broken potteries from the Suṅga-Kuṣāṇa period, together with potsherds of foreign origin. Terra-cotta figures betraying influences of Hellenic art have also been found from Ātgharā at a distance of about 12 miles south of Calcutta, near the Ādigāṅgā.

Now, a study of the yields from the archaeological sites discussed above indicate that during the rule of the Maurya-Suṅga-Kuṣāṇa kings, the port of Tāmralipti and some subsidiary ones in the hinterland within a radius of about 150 miles from the former saw enor-

35. Vide P.C. DASGUPTA, *The Early terracottas of Tāmralipta*, fig. 14.

36. R.C. MAJUMDER, *History of Ancient Bengal*, p. 623.

37. P.C. DASGUPTA, *op. cit.*, fig. 9.

38. D.P. GHOSH, *Studies in Museum and Museology in India*, p. 44.

39. *Ibidem*.

40. *Ibidem*, pp. 50-51.

mous volume of trade and traffic with foreign countries, east and west. Until Chia-na-t'iao is archaeologically explored, its contact with foreign countries before the third century can not be properly accounted for. But since these twin-ports lie very near to each other, the distance being about 30 miles, the growing traffic of Tāmralipti led to the rise of Chia-na-t'iao/Kān̄thi from perhaps the later part of the second century A.D. It seems that, among foreign traders, the Graeco-Roman community of traders were most prominent in pre-Christian centuries. The Śaka-Kuṣāṇa components in the Indian trading community became most noticeable from the first century onwards on account of their political hold over the Gangetic valley. The only commercial outlet for these people, as indeed of other people of the region, was the twin ports of Tāmralipti and Chia-na-t'iao/Kān̄thi at the mouth of the Ganges. K'ang T'al's fragments and the terra-cotta art of the lower Gangetic valley underline this position. The details furnished above not only establish the identity of Chia-na-t'iao and Kān̄thi as a twin-port from Canton to Antioch through India before the route across the Bay of Bengal became popular after the Fourth Century A.D.